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Hoffa's Heir Apparent

Frank Edward Fitzsimmons

Special to The New York Times

MIAMI BEACH, Fla., July 7—The man chosen today as the potential successor to James R. Hoffa as president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters is a man who never pursued the role. Frank Edward Fitzsimmons, the 58-year-old Detroit Teamster vice president elected today as general vice president of the 1.7 million-member labor union, has always placed his loyalty to Hoffa above any political ambitions.

Man in the News

That loyalty is what assured Mr. Fitzsimmons of his selection by the union's convention today to the new $55,000 a year job. For there was no one else in the union's hierarchy that Hoffa could trust as surely as "Fitz" to manage the Teamsters for him if he is jailed on recent criminal convictions.

Mr. Fitzsimmons is an affable man with a soft voice and stocky build (5 feet 10 inches, 192 pounds) who looks more like a small-town businessman than a labor leader. He wears glasses and his round face is topped by wavy black hair that is turning gray.

"If you were going to look for a nice grandfather for your kids—kindly, congenial, very warm—you'd pick a guy like Fitz," observed one Teamster vice president.

The new general vice president's associates say he is an adept unionist and capable contract negotiator who concentrates on bread and butter issues, rather than intellectual exercises. He works diligently, but lacks the fierce drive and magnetism of Jimmy Hoffa.

A Family Man

"Jimmy will say good night to his wife and mix with the boys," one Teamster official said. "Fitz would rather go to the beach with his wife and kids."

Some union officials suggest the strongly centralized control that Hoffa enjoys over the nation's largest union would loosen somewhat under a Fitzsimmons administration. If so, it would result more from the contrast in their temperments than from any variance in their views.

United Press International

Loyalty is a first principle

Hoffa said he had picked Mr. Fitzsimmons for the new job because "he believes in the same philosophy that I do" and has the courage to take "direct action" for the membership when necessary.

Mr. Fitzsimmons adds that Hoffa's drive toward national labor agreements is the wave of the future. When asked if he has any policy differences with the president, he asserts:

"Absolutely none."

Hoffa's designation of Mr. Fitzsimmons capped a 30-year association between the two men during which "Fitz" has become a top Hoffa lieutenant in Detroit. The acquaintenance began when Mr. Fitzsimmons joined Hoffa's local 299 as a truck driver in 1935.

Hoffa named him as an organizer in 1936, and elevated him to second spot in the local around 1940.

Mr. Fitzsimmons was named one of 13 Teamster international vice presidents upon the death of Owen B. Brennan in 1961.

He still serves as vice president of the 16,000-member Local 299, where he runs the day-to-day business for Hoffa, who still is the local president. He has been secretary-treasurer of the 80,000-member Michigan Conference of Teamsters since 1949, and vice president (again under Hoffa) of Teamster Joint Council 43 in Detroit since 1959.

The new general vice president was among Teamster leaders attacked by a Senate committee investigating rackets between 1957 and 1960.

Mr. Fitzsimmons was born on April 7, 1908, the fourth of five children, in Jeannette, Pa. His father, who held an interest in a local brewery, moved the family to Detroit in 1924 in search of greater opportunity.

Quit High School

But his father soon had a heart atack. So the son quit high school after one year and went to work in an automobile hardware plant in Detroit. In 1932, he became a city bus driver.

In 1935 he took a 22 cent an hour job loading and unloading trucks, and worked his way up to become an over-the-road truck driver in the Middle West before Hoffa tapped him for a union job.

Mr. Fitzsimmons, who is fighting his weight at the luncheon table, drinks an occasional Canadian whisky and water. He plays "a little golf" at the Dearborn Country Club, where he is a member, and is a baseball and poker enthusiast.

But he travels roughly two weeks a month, which he says leaves him little time for outside pursuits.

The union leader, whose first wife died, was married in 1952 to his present wife, Mary Patricia. They have two children, Gary, 12, and Carol Ann 9. They reside in Dearborn, a western suburb of Detroit.

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